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SIGHT AND SOUND

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EGYPT

PALESTINE

GREECE

CONTRIBUTORS: Norman Wilson

Roger Manvell

A. W. Bartram

Keith Bean

Herman G. Weinberg

6^{D.}

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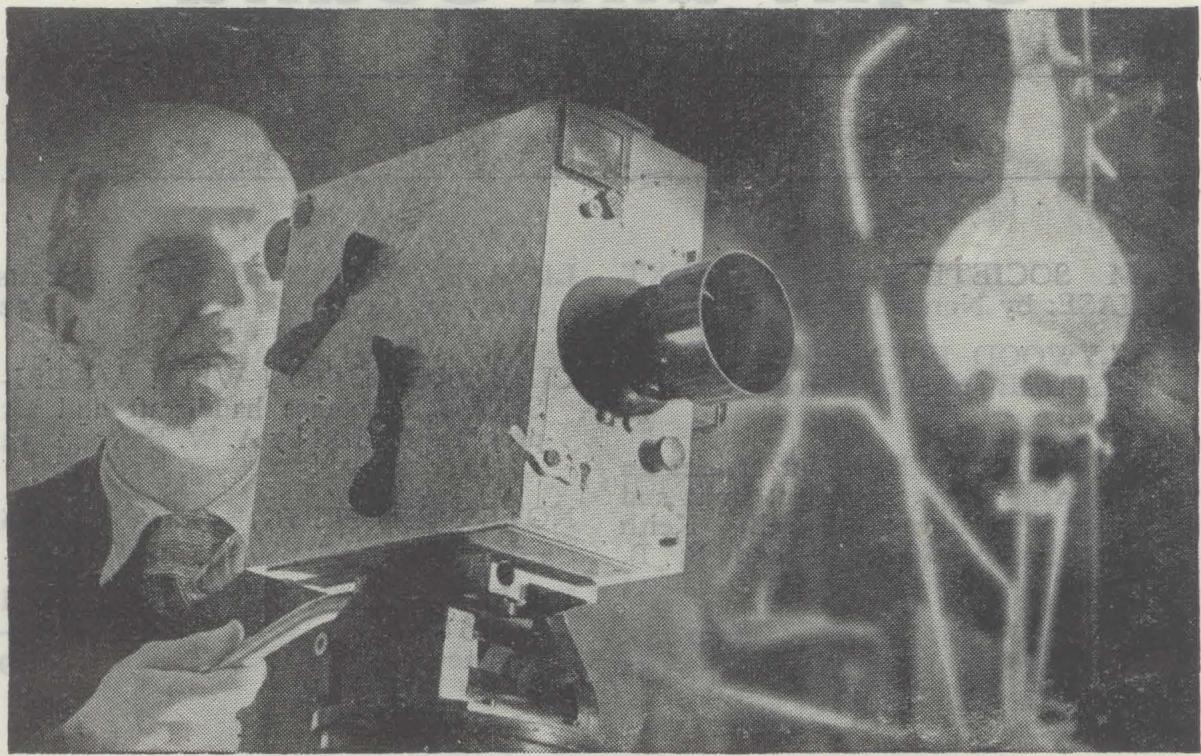
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Film Societies—The Next Phase

by Norman Wilson

FOR nearly twenty years the film societies have been concerned with establishing, in the first place, the claims of the film as a medium of expression with almost limitless possibilities, and, latterly, in educating a wider public to understand and appreciate the unique qualities and emerging virtues of this great medium. The pursuit of these objects, largely attained by bringing together in selective programmes the best productions of the Continent, which few people would otherwise have seen, was undoubtedly a major contribution to the development of an intelligent cinema and to the advancement of the art of the film in this country. Throughout these formative years British documentary producers and the film society movement progressed together, sustaining and encouraging each other in a spirit of real co-operation and respect.

Two Tasks

The original aims of the movement have now been largely achieved. The film has long since been accepted as a creative means of expression on level terms with the other arts, and in many of the larger towns public cinemas are putting on shows of a standard and character similar to the average film society programme. But it would be folly to think, because the movement's *original* objective has been reached, that its task is finished. It is far from it. There are still millions of filmgoers whose tastes are deplorably low; there are still too many producers who pander to these tastes, or further degrade them; nor, on a higher level, has the art of the film ceased to evolve and develop new

technique demanding the response of an intellectually advanced audience.

The film societies, therefore, still have a two-fold main task to perform: one, to increase the general standard of public taste in films, and so increase the general standard of production; and, two, to create a smaller specialised audience for the experiments of advanced film workers.

To carry out effectively the first part of this task would involve, it must be freely admitted, the broadening of the policy of some of the societies within the movement. In the world to-day there is no place for smug eclecticism, and merely to provide private performances for the supposedly superior tastes of a limited number of members is to deny the whole aim of the movement. A film society must take its place in the community and try to serve all the film needs of the area in which it operates. It should be willing to collaborate with the schools, the churches, the local scientific film society, and above all, with the youth organisations. Youth clubs, indeed, would seem to be the most fruitful field in which to develop the idea of film appreciation and one in which there is the greatest need of help from people who really know something about films.

Pioneers

Already one society has organised a week-end film school for youth leaders and has formed a panel of speakers who can go around giving informed talks on the cinema. But much more is required. Where funds are available the purchase of a 16 mm. projector would allow an enterprising society not only to give suitably composed

programmes to youth clubs but to go out and do pioneering work in nearby towns and so encourage the formation of new societies. It should be one of the immediate post-war aims of each existing film society to adopt two or more neighbouring towns until they can establish their own independent organisations.

Other pioneering work of a more specialised character is the presentation of programmes which show what the film could do for various sectional and community organisations. A social documentary programme might show the welfare associations and the local authority how films could help them in their work. The heads of local industry and commerce could be invited to see how sponsored films could assist local industry. The churches have still to be shown that social documentary can achieve more practical results than sermons or evangelical films. From seeing a programme of science films, teachers, students and workers might be encouraged to start a local scientific film society.

Wide Front

All this may to some seem to be getting away from the study of the *art* of the film, but it all ties up. The more outlets there are for serious and purposeful films the more opportunities there will be for progressive producers, who need all the support organised filmgoers can give them. During the war the Ministry of Information has provided a steady flow of production contracts and has built up a vast network of non-theatrical distribution. The film societies can help considerably to fill the breach when the Government discontinues or reduces its film activities.

That is the wide front on which the film societies must operate, but their spear-head must always be ahead of the general advance of film ideas.

With the opening of repertory cinemas many societies may find their membership diminishing, but the smaller, more informed group can be bolder and more enterprising. It can put on more advanced programmes than the repertory cinema, experiments in technique, in sound, in colour and, before long, in television. This will mean harder work and a livelier imagination than called for by booking the latest French or Russian "masterpiece", but it is the original and primary function of the film societies and must never be neglected. In addition, every progressive move within the commercial cinema in line with the ideals for which the societies work should be given wholehearted support. It is better to have a good film shown to the community than to have it reserved for the private delight of a limited audience. When a cinema books an outstanding film, then the local film society should do something to lend its support and to let the public know about it. Many societies already print monthly guides to what is showing locally and it would be helpful if these could be extended and made available to other organisations for circulation.

Turning Point

The end of the wars in Europe and Asia and the beginning of the period of reconstruction brings the film society movement to a turning point. The years ahead will be a time of social and spiritual as well as political and material changes, all of which will find expression in the cinema. For the future there will be more and not less work to be done by the film societies. If they are ready to face their responsibilities, ready for vigorous, dynamic action, their contribution to the future development of the cinema in this country can be as valuable as it has been in the first phase of their career.

HOLLYWOOD

"is interested in the activities of the good cultural life provided . . ." suggests HAROLD LEONARD

IN considering the cultural level of American films and their makers, one of the things we often forget is the provincial character of the place where the movies are made. So many photographers and correspondents are engaged in the task of making Hollywood's life seem interesting, not to say glamorous, that one gets into the habit of thinking of Hollywood as a big city, like New York. Quite beside the point is any distinction between Hollywood (or rather Hollywood plus the other, more suburban and outlying communities also housing film studios) and the city of Los Angeles, the greater whole. It is Los Angeles with its three million inhabitants—the whole—to which we are referring.

Art Passes By

The backwardness of the Los Angeles community cannot be wholly explained in terms of geographical isolation, with the countering example of San Francisco so handy. Travelling art exhibitions get booked by San Francisco museums and will visit the tiny college town of Claremont, California, just thirty miles east of Los Angeles, but will skip Los Angeles completely. Geographical factors explain, but do not mitigate, the dearth of attractions by New York theatrical touring companies; the world's film capital sees fewer current plays than Eastern and Middle Western cities of half its size. Of local theatrical production, despite the existence of several score "intimate playhouses,"

e.g., showcases for the questionable acting schools of the town, the city that is "so full of theatrical talent" (as is always being ventured by incredulous visitors) has had, outside of one university theatre, just one short-lived theatrical project of significance—Peter Godfrey's transplanted London Gate Theatre—since the dissolution of the W.P.A. Federal Theatre. The "spoken drama" section of newspaper amusement pages here round out their advertisements for night club floor shows, vaudeville, a once satirical puppet theatre and a couple of beer-hall burlesques, with announcements for original drama in vein best suggested by their titles. These include among current offerings, *A Honey in the Hay*, *Maid in the Ozarks*, and *She Lost It in Campeche*.

It is true that prosperous residents take annual trips to New York, but this is still quite a different thing from living the year round in the stimulating atmosphere of a cultural centre, as French film makers are able to do, with their studios just out of Paris, or British with theirs just down from London, or Russian with the assorted cultural influences of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and points East. Lacking such resources to hand, the American film maker has had to subsist virtually upon what he has brought with him when he first came to Hollywood. In the past he did not worry much about what to do when that gave out, because he didn't plan to stay long. But in recent years it has begun to dawn on numbers of Hollywoodites that this is their home and that if they

don't like it here, nobody is in a better position than they themselves to change things.

Lengthy Prologue

This may seem a lengthy prologue to a simple recital of recent Hollywood cultural events. Yet the significance of much that is beginning in Hollywood can only be grasped if viewed against a perspective of the actual as opposed to the imagined Hollywood.

Political stirring is not exactly new in Hollywood, consciousness in this direction having been perceptible here since shortly after the rise of German fascism. Lately, that interest has taken on a new dimension with the participation of the University of California in some of the industry's projects. One of the most active of industry organisations, for example, is the Writers' Mobilization, a council of writing and corollary unions and guilds (as the white-collar unions here prefer to call themselves) set up the day the United States entered the war. In addition to innumerable more urgent and shorter-term undertakings, the Mobilization, acting jointly with the University, sponsored in the fall of 1943 a three-day Writers' Congress. Convening on the University grounds, the Congress undertook to explore ways in which screen writers, musicians, radio writers, journalists, animated cartoonists, even popular song writers, could most effectively employ their skills in the national effort. The Congress had a soundness and weight not invariably associated with Hollywood enterprises, nor were these qualities purchased at the cost of alertness and aliveness. Ideological engrossment was not so complete either as to exclude creative and craft discussions, though the so-called creative sessions were less satisfactory than the ideological ones both because of the lesser abilities deployed in the handling of craft matters and because

of the failure to find a better than superficial relation between the political education of the writer and the process of personal expression.

Music Leads

A similar conference (this time denominated an "institute") on the subject of *Music in Contemporary Life* was offered last fall by the University in conjunction with a wartime committee of film, radio and other local musicians and composers. Music is Los Angeles' best art in point not only of performance but of creation. On the performance side there are, in addition to two symphony orchestras, a number of chamber-music societies playing long seasons of modern and unhackneyed classical programmes; and for composers there are, first, the established "greats," like Stravinsky, Schoenberg, *et al.*, who have come after strenuous careers finally to settle in Los Angeles, next, a good number of promising younger composers (Ingolf Dahl, George Tremblay), then the journeymen film and radio background-music composers (Los Angeles is next to New York as an origination point for radio programs), also the popular song writers for the movies, etc., etc. The Music Institute was broader in its reference than the Writers' Congress, practical film and radio music being but two of the areas of musical interest broached. Church music, folk, jazz, theatrical; music for morale, under fascism, for international amity, as therapy; musical aesthetics, problems of interpretation, the composer's problems, music and the dance; technology, musicology, and the critical press. It was significant that the lead in promoting the Institute was taken by people from the organisationally more cohesive film group.

Both conversations have followed a fruitful pattern of continuous activities. The Musicians' Congress (as the

non-University part of the Institute's sponsorship is called) has gone on to present a monthly series of large-scale concerts devoted to folk, Pan-American, jazz and similar music, and has been at work preparing the Institute's proceedings for publication. The Proceedings of the Writers' Congress appeared in the fall of 1944, a stout volume carrying the imprint of the University of California, to receive less attention in its rather forbidding guise of "Proceedings" than its solid worth entitled it. For a period of more than a year after the Writers' Congress had adjourned, a number of groups meeting in seminar formation continued to discuss some of the Congress' more provocative subjects. One of the most vigorous of these, operating under the title "Craft Problems of the Realistic Film", foregathered every other week in one or another studio projection-room to screen an outstanding film and discuss with its makers significant problems involved in its filming.

New Periodicals

Now the Mobilization is working on a quarterly journal to be published again jointly with the University of California. It will be known as the *Hollywood Quarterly* and is planned to treat on the professional level but secularly the great new mass communication media of radio and motion pictures. At the same time the magazine will aim at charting the general cultural advancement of the West. So far there is little of a concrete nature to report, except price, which is a whopping \$1.25 per issue but promissory of a thick and generously illustrated book; and editorial board, which consists of three representatives from the University and two from the Mobilization. The Mobilization's men are John Howard Lawson, playwright and scenarist-author of the Spanish Civil War film melodrama *Blockade*

and World War II films *Sahara* and *Action in the North Atlantic*, and the film producer Kenneth Macgowan, maker of *Little Women* and *Becky Sharp*, former New York stage producer, experimental theatre authority and primeval film critic.

On a less ambitious scale but farther advanced toward publication is the craft and trade monthly, *The Screen Writer*, published by the Screen Writers' Guild, first issue of which should be out any day now. Dalton Trumbo, its editor, now a successful screen writer, looks back to a journalistic apprenticeship as a film reviewer on a crusading Hollywood trade paper, the *Hollywood Spectator*, published for many years by Welford Beaton.

Audiences Small

Though the programmes have been available since 1936, it has been only within the last two years that the historic art films circulated by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, of New York, have been regularly viewable here. Several previous attempts had been made by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (the Award-giving organisation) to present film classics in ordered series of programmes, but the projects, over-elaborate perhaps, failed to establish themselves. In 1942 a small private art gallery, the American Contemporary Gallery, took over the local franchise and the gallery is currently preparing its twelfth series. Audiences continue small and are far from representative. A quorum can always be collected from the dilettante or aesthetic fringe for exercises of this sort, and the aspect of the matter that pleases this public—a kind of esotericism—is partly (but not wholly) responsible for the general indifference shown the proceedings by the great practising public, the directors, writers, actors, etc., who

could profit so materially by attending. Clara Grossman, the gallery's director, perseveres nonetheless in her efforts to maintain the format of screening plus commentary or question-period, featuring someone associated with the film, which she has set for the sessions and she has succeeded in persuading a fairly imposing list of cinema notables to stand and deliver in the question-answering slot. Film makers who have come back thus to stand beside their films include D. W. Griffith (living in Hollywood but inactive), Lillian Gish, Fritz Lang, the scenarist Dudley Nichols, director Clarence Brown, Edward G. Robinson, Erich von Stroheim, René Clair, Buster Keaton and Karl Freund.*

Coterie Character

The coterie character of the Film-Library films audience should not, however, be taken as the final proof of Hollywood's indifference to its better film self. Film showings, given the advantage of even a minimum of Hollywood's own promotional tricks, can draw turn-away houses. Invitational showings—for the press, for members of particular guilds or trade

unions only: in short, anything exclusive—will have the rest of the film colony begging for tickets. Thus, for a period before the war the Academy showed to the press the best shorts of the month. Later, British and then our own documentary, training, and war-record films were presented to the industry by the Academy, by the Writers' Mobilization, by the Office of Inter-American Affairs, by the Office of War Information. Such programmes of expository films have been extremely well attended, and "documentary" films, for long years the secret treasure of the aesthetes, have become a public cause.

The Answer

The answer seems to be that Hollywood is interested in the activities of the good cultural life provided that in each instance the stamp of authority—almost any authority—be upon the activity. Such an attitude may be somewhat less sophisticated than that of older metropolises but it is a step ahead of the "premeer—" Rupert Hughes—and "Concert Under the Stars—" bounded outlook of yester-year.

* In the way of old pictures, Hollywood is the home of a theatre that must be virtually unique: a theatre built to show silent films exclusively. It is a purely commercial undertaking, though its owner brings an attitude close to dedication to his work. But there is no joker or gimmick to it: "Movie"—the theatre's name—shows 16 millimetre prints of films available through the so-called non-theatrical catalogues, shows them straight, i.e., without any cheap hiss-the-villain provocations, and by the quality of the theatre's musical accompaniment (recordings compiled into a score and electrically reproduced) and other components of its performance, "Movie" puts on a show that thoroughly engrosses the interest of an authentic neighbourhood audience and at the very modest admission prices "Movie" charges

—5 and 10 cents, penny tax—gives them an all-time bargain. Until "Movie" was closed by the war—being a one-man (and woman) proposition—the tiny theatre off the beaten track was beginning to attract, in addition to its backlog neighbourhood audience, a regular sprinkling of industry people who could slip in to catch their old-time selves or of their forebears amid these more natural theatrical surroundings. One remarkable thing was how, with the repertory of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library denied it (Film Library films may not be shown commercially), "Movie" managed to pull from the dreary, unrevealing sources remaining to it one programme plum after another. Proprietor John Hampton's encyclopedic knowledge of film credits was here responsible.

Post-War Survey

A series of four articles dealing with the film industry in Egypt, Palestine, India and Greece. Similar articles on other countries will follow in subsequent issues of SIGHT & SOUND.

I. EGYPT by Roger Manvell

THE cinemas of Egypt and the rest of the Middle East are dominated, like those of so many other countries, by the American film product. The big American companies have their agents at Cairo, and many cinemas such as the Metro at Cairo are owned by the companies themselves. Egypt has about 150 cinemas, these are almost entirely centred at Cairo and Alexandria. The bulk of them are owned by private circuits financed by Greeks or Egyptians. There is also a considerable number of open-air cinemas playing only at night.

During the last eight years there has grown up an Arabic film industry financed from private sources without any State intervention or subsidy. This industry now produces some 60 features a year, made by five companies of which the most prominent are the Misr Studios near Cairo, a short distance from the Pyramids at Giza. The films normally produced are not of great artistic importance. They are mostly musicals, melodrama and slapstick. On the other hand they are widely patronised throughout the Middle East, and the industry which produces them is therefore very prosperous. There are many reasons for this.

The racial and consequently the language problem is acute in the Middle East. In Egypt the languages most commonly spoken are Arabic, French, Greek and English. Cinemas have to allow for this. In Egyptian theatres using American and a very few British films, the picture is projected using the original sound-track

in English, whilst the titling is in French and on a small side screen a strip-film projector operates a running transcription of the French titles in both Arabic and Greek. Since the operators of these projectors are normally Arabic-speaking Egyptians, it is more chance than scientific management if the Arabic titles are within five or even ten minutes of the actual continuity of the film.

The urban Egyptians are nevertheless regular filmgoers, and the Arabic-speaking world is a wide one in the Middle East area. It was therefore logical that films should be made by Arabic-speaking artists so that this large and often wealthy public should have a modest film supply which would not be subject to the vagaries of the titles on the side screen.

The area of distribution covers all the Middle East from French North Africa to the Sudan and Abyssinia in the South, and from Palestine to Turkey in the North. This means that the returns on the films made are high and that expenditure on their production is correspondingly generous. Thirty to fifty thousand pounds are spent on the average production, and stars of note may earn as much as fifteen thousand pounds for one picture. All production is what may be termed independent, that is financed by private enterprise. There is virtually no link-up between the production and exhibition sides of the trade.

The key to Arabic film-making is the star system, neither producers nor directors having their prominence.

A notable star is Youssef Wahby who is both actor and producer-director. He plays heavy and dramatic character parts, such as Raimu would play in French films or Jannings in German. Women stars include Oum Kalsoum a singer, Tahia Carioca a singer and dancer and Asmahan, a remarkable artist who died recently at the age of 22.

Simple Pictures

Arabic pictures are simple and naive in their appeal. A great deal is made of the monotonous Arabic singing with its dependence on rhythm rather than on emotional variety. Dancing is also popular, and horse-play in knockabout farce.

The Egyptian Government has little or no interest in the film industry. The only sign of support lies in the recent Quota Act which makes it obligatory for all cinemas to give four weeks' playing-time a year to Arabic pictures. This law is being opposed by the large American-owned cinemas, and since all the raw stock for making Arabic pictures comes from the States, it seems likely that the Egyptian quota may only be maintained after a struggle.

I had too little time to see many Arabic films, but I was able to visit the best Studios in Egypt, the Misr Studios. These are promoted by the Misr Bank of Cairo, and the Supervisor is the Frenchman M. André Vigneau. The Studios are directed by an Egyptian Manager, Hosny Bey Neguib. M. Vigneau was a distinguished photographer in Paris, and entered films through the documentary movement. He made *Chartres* and experimented in colour with Alexieff, producer of *Night on a Bare Mountain*.

Associated with the Studios as a technical assistant is another Frenchman M. Armand Panigel whose main interest lies in educational films, though he is also working in features.

He is also writing a book on the development and history of French cinema, and has run a very successful Film Club in Cairo which specialised in showing French and British films during the War. Through his courtesy I was able to visit the Studios and discuss their work with M. Vigneau. I saw the rough-cut of a unique Arabic film called *The Black Market*, made very much in the French style. It was written and directed by a Egyptian K. Telmissany and contains some brilliant camera-work by Ahmed Khorchid.

French Influence

An interesting development under the supervision of M. Vigneau is the production in French of films by a new company called Nil-Paris, founded when Paris was still occupied. So far only one feature film has been completed, *M. Arnaud*, which was produced, scripted and directed by Vigneau himself. I saw only a few sections of this picture of the Free French Movement, but they were sufficient to show the strength and integrity of the playing of Henri Nassiet as an architect and town-planning expert whose ambition is to help in the reconstruction of France, and the charm of Lucienne Le Marchand as a young girl in the Free French Women's Services, engaged to M. Arnaud's son, a paratrooper. She originally played Georges Sand in the French film *Chopin*.

M. Arnaud is the first Free French film to be completed. A second film planned is a war picture, *Ceux de Leclerc* which will be scripted and directed by Armand Panigel under the supervision of Vigneau. In addition to the features the Nil-Paris Company are to make documentary and instructional films for use in France. M. Vigneau is at work on a film about the Pyramids, whilst M. Panigel is to supervise the instructional films for the French Ministry of Education.

II. PALESTINE & TRANSJORDAN

by Keith Bean

THE most interesting part of the job of David Clayton, Films Officer to the Government of Palestine and Transjordan, is that dealing with non-commercial activities.

The Films Officer has two mobile cinema vans giving between them over 70 shows a month and covering the whole of Palestine. Each programme is drawn up at the beginning of the month and the two vans work over the whole of Palestine and Transjordan, one working northward and the other southward. The Films Officer's assistants give strict supervision to these tours, checking up on numbers, presentation and other aspects which may influence policy.

In Palestine each major village is covered in the course of a month from Dan to Beersheba. In the summer all shows are in the open air. Summer is the busy season. In winter—and the Palestine winter can be very cold—the shows are in the few village halls or in Government schools. Each van carries a driver, an operator and a commentator. Through liaison with the District Officer, word is sent round that the van will be in the particular district on a certain day or days. The "muktar" or head-man then spreads the news and the visit of the van is made a festive occasion.

Average length of programmes is about an hour and a half. A typical programme is: *War Pictorial News* (Arabic), *V-2*, *Lister the Scientist*, *Save the Hills* (made by the Film Officer's film unit and dealing with soil erosion), an Arabic-dubbed cartoon, *Road to Russia*. Then follows a speech by the head-man and usually some little celebration. There is nobody more hospitable than the Arab.

Although to some degree the propaganda content may be overdone,

these shows are worth while. Health and agricultural films are having good effect, slowly but surely. Statistics prove it. The effort is made to get one film dealing with agriculture or health into every programme. The Films Officer has made several himself—slow and with a special technique because of the novelty of the screen to most Arabs.

That is the 35 mm. activity on the Arab side.

The Jews in the towns and on their collective farms present another complex problem. They are more highly educated, studious, emancipated and highly "national-conscious". Most collective settlements have their own projectors and are serviced by ambulant showmen who give a show to the whole community at a cost of roughly six pounds per performance. The Films Officer serves these settlements with shorts through the usual distributor and that works fairly satisfactorily.

The Films Officer serves as many Government schools as possible with 35 mm. but much more could be done. The Films Officer has done his best to get the schools interested by supplying notes and trying to influence interest.

The Jewish population runs its own Education Department under Government supervision. Here there was initial suspicion of intentions, now happily waning. The Films Officer also works with the Guggenheim Playgrounds and the Hadassah organisation, and recently a thousand schoolchildren saw *World of Plenty* and more showings of it are still going on.

There are also three 16 mm. machines in full use in schools, colleges and clubs. They are of course mobile. But there is a shortage of good 16 mm.

films and the Film Officer's library is small. Said Clayton the present occupier of the job: "I often look with longing at the Gas Company catalogues, the British Film Institute lists and others and wish that I could get these films out. My successor will probably do it . . . "

The 16 mm. section shows the ordinary propaganda films from the Ministry of Information and the British Council and there are clamorous requests for those excellent *Why We Fight* films. This section also serves all prisons, reformatories and detention camps, and now the more remote Palestine Police Forts are to be covered. More projectors will go out as soon as export permits allow. Wherever possible Clayton is training local village boys—Arabs—to use the projectors so that when the time comes when each major school has its projector there will be a nucleus staff to choose from. These boys are keen to learn operating and maintenance which makes this important work all the more satisfying.

Transjordan is different from Palestine in that it is all Arab—Bedouin and Druse—and has no Jewish population. The people are more backward

then those in Palestine but enjoy films. Clayton has given shows to as many as ten thousand tribesmen in Roman amphitheatres. Here the best plan has proved to be giving a good issue of animated cartoons and films of dancing girls followed by a health film in Arabic and a specially prepared talk by the commentator.

Undoubtedly film is having its effect in Transjordan.

In production, Clayton has his own unit. He directs and he has a good local cameraman. They shoot silent and finish the job in Cairo. There is no sound equipment in Palestine, but Clayton is trying to get sound equipment from England. The unit does its own processing in its own laboratory, which had to be built up from nothing, and the results are fairly satisfactory.

Films the unit has already made are on co-operative farming, irrigation, glass-blowing (old and new methods) and recruiting. Now being made in co-operation with the Agricultural Department is a film on compost-making.

It may not sound exciting but to thoses who see the need and, also, the results, it is well worth doing.

III. INDIA by Ernest Whitehall

INDIA is potentially one of the richest of all the film markets in the world, and one that is destined to gain increased importance, if all the plans for its development mature.

The main feature of these is a great expansion in the number of cinemas. At the moment there are in the region of 1,700 cinemas in India to serve a total population of about 390,000,000 people, as contrasted with the 16,900 cinemas, in the United States, which cater for 130,000,000 people.

The Indian film industry hopes eventually, to increase the number of cinemas and road show units to 10,000. This would, in its turn, mean

an increased demand for suitable films to play the new cinemas, with tentative post-war plans calling for 300 features, 100 instructional films, and 52 newsreels per year.

If these plans go through they will stabilise India's position as the largest film producing nation in the Far East. Even in 1944 her total of 162 films made her second only to the United States in the world market. Most of these films, however, are cheaply and shoddily made, though the quality is now the highest for native language productions in the Far East.

A point in favour of the proposed expansion of the industry is the fact

that the cinema can do much to combat illiteracy among the masses. If the Indian cinema is to combat the ignorance of the millions of peasants it will have to alter radically some of the types of films being made. For instance, it is difficult to understand what contribution *Arman*, billed as "Cupid's own story", or *Station Master*, a "grand gala mix-up of romance and railways" are going to make in the cause of elementary education. In all fairness, however, it must be added that a number of mythological subjects have been filmed, in addition to a number of quality films dealing with past periods of Indian history, whilst proof that the producers themselves are aware of the primitiveness of many of their films is evidenced by the desire of the Independent Cinema Association to send a delegation of Indian film directors to study movie making in America, Britain, and Russia.

Stock Shortage

The biggest headache of the industry, in common with the rest of the world, is still the shortage of raw film stock. This has caused the closing of a number of studios, especially in South India, and led to a Defence of India Regulation in 1942 restricting the length of feature films to 11,000 feet, and of trailers to 400 feet—which may seem strange to occidental eyes, but it must be borne in mind that Indian audiences have always preferred marathon films of twelve and fourteen reels, and these films usually have continuous runs of two and three months at one cinema.

There are a number of different languages in which films are made, as well as the foreign films that are imported. American and British films are in first place in metropolitan areas, but it is possible to see Egyptian and Chinese films, the latter starring China's No. 1. film star, the delightfully named Miss Butterfly Wu who

according to report, escaped from Hong Kong disguised as a beggar with eight children.

Native films gross larger rentals than British or American productions, but this is mainly because of the extended runs enjoyed by Indian made subjects. Again, whereas American films make the bulk of their money during the first six months of release an Indian film must wait $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ years.

Improving Quality

There are reputed to be 25 major companies producing a set programme of films each year, and it is from these companies that come the most important of the local films: each year their quality is steadily improving, and, despite the barriers due to the language difficulty, each year there are more films that attract the attention of the European or American units of the population. Besides these major companies there are a large number of independent units, an independent being defined as one who does not possess his own studio or has completed production of three feature films in succession. Just before the war there were 50 small producing concerns, some of whom produced intermittently and some not at all, while in South India the figure was put at 70.

An important topic that was much discussed towards the end of last year was the first visit of Mahatma Gandhi to see his first film. He came in for some criticism on the grounds that he should have chosen an Indian film instead of the Warner Brothers' American production *Mission to Moscow*.

Finally, it is by no means certain that the Indian cinemagoer is less selective than the British cinemagoer, especially when one super cinema advertises *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as "Paramount's Technicolour colourful comedy", and adds that "every show flooded with roars of laughter".

IV. GREECE by S. B. Carter

ATHENS to-day presents a concave mirror to the world. On walls and pavements, in shop windows you may see reflected most of the cultural as well as the political conflict of our time. A German air raid notice still flutters loosely from a wall, postcards of German film stars may still be bought as well as German lighters, fountain pens and cameras. The initials E.A.M. and K.K.E. in faded red, often half obliterated, vie with the more recent "X" sign of the Royalists in brilliant blue. Everyone is trying to learn English, and an announcement has been made that it will be taught in the secondary schools; but the French institute which has not closed throughout the war, will not relinquish the old cultural supremacy of France without a struggle. You may still hear in the smarter circles, one Greek speaking to another Greek in French. Many of the older Greeks are secretly opposed to the teaching of a language which will make them out of date; and, strangest of all, the left wing press is opposed to the introduction of English which they associate with right wing politics. Meanwhile, more than one British soldier is having a love affair in Italian with a Greek, while waiters and taxi drivers will still say "Bitte" when they forget.

It is the same with the cinema. Most of the films showing are now British or American, though in the provinces you may still strike a Hungarian or even an Italian film. I am told that there are still German films with French dialogue, but I have never seen one yet. The American and British films, which pass through the strainer of O.W.I. or A.I.S., are mostly of a morale inculcating type—*In which we serve*, *Mr. Smith goes to Washington* (renamed *America the land of freedom*), *One of our Aircraft is Missing* and *The Gentle Sex*. But some old favourites mostly from

local pre-war stock, are also coming out. If you missed *The Four Feathers* at home, *Tales of Manhattan* or *You Were Never Lovelier* you can run them to earth in Athens. In Easter Week there was the unusual experience of three religious films running at a single time, *The Sign of the Cross*, *King of Kings* and the *Calvary* of Duvivier.

If it is four years since Athenians had an English speaking film, it is nine years since they have had a Russian one. They are making up for it. From the Sov-Film agency *The Rainbow*, *Stalingrad*, *The People Advances*, *Zogia*, *Nastradin Chotsas* and *Ivan the Terrible* have already found their way into Athens cinemas and are beginning to percolate the provinces. As in England before the war, to like or not to like these films is to some extent a question of politics. At a time when it was still unsafe for members of E.A.M. to express themselves in other ways they were following *The Rainbow* with that fierce and disciplined applause which is a sure sign of K.K.E. activity.

What happened in the occupation? After being out of touch with the film activity of the greater part of Europe in the last five years, it was interesting to hear what a Greek film producer had to report. After the defeat of Greece, cinemas were flooded with German and Italian films. In general, he said the Greeks liked the Germans more than the Italians, but with their films it was the opposite. The German films were technically unimpressive—except Leni Riefenstahl's film of the Olympiad—and loaded with propaganda *ad nauseam*. In the Italian films you could at least hope for a straight story without any politics. Italian studios were fond of historical drama on a colossal scale, if possible in technicolour. If Italian production was good, Hungarian was

better. There seemed to be, he said, a natural affinity between the Hungarians and the Greeks, and the highest praise to give a film was to say that it might have been Hungarian. Czech films were dull and stodgy. The new Russian films were interesting, different from anything to which the Greeks were used, but he doubted if they would ever have a widespread popular appeal. American films, with their accomplished technique and infectious vitality, were liked. British films, in general, were not; the tempo was wrong for a Greek audience. French films, of course, had always been popular. Shown throughout the occupation period, they had exerted a more continuous influence on Greek production than any other type of film. Most of the technical terms in use are French, and the influence of the theatre, so marked a feature of French films, also holds most Greek directors in its grip.

Since the liberation, three new Greek films have appeared. The first, *Exormisis*, was a series of episodes from Greek history loosely, much too loosely, strung together. A heavily shackled semi-transparent female figure, symbolizing Greece, lumbered across the screen from time to time, obscuring the action in the more exciting parts. One brief sequence, of the first siren of the war, was conceived in terms of the cinema; the rest was a collection of news reels and scraps and animated stills. A second film, *Broken Hearts* is about a violinist who falls in love, goes to the war and is reported lost; returning he finds the girl married to his closest friend. Divorce luckily is not too difficult in Greece, and all ends happily. The dialogue is terrible. The natural background however, especially the play of the wind on trees and grass, is recorded with sensitivity; and there is one taverna scene, where a comic character is telling how he captured five Italians, which is really Greek in

flavour, and suggests a promising line of development.

The most recent film, *The Villa with the Water Lilies*, marks a definite advance. It is the first Greek film to be conceived wholly in terms of the cinema; the camera moves about like a human eye with our intelligence behind it, wit is visual as well as verbal. The interiors are convincing and well lit. One does not feel in fact as one does with most Greek films, that it was made by an amateur. The story admittedly runs true to type. A young doctor, poor but proud, and a local rich girl, haughty but in love, end up finally in one another's arms. Any social significance this film may have is purely incidental. The class war is a peg on which to hang romance. One is acutely conscious of the fact as one catches sight, over the shoulders of these star crossed lovers, of the obliterated K.K.E. signs on the statues and the walls. What were these two doing, one cannot help wondering, in the recent civil war? Such a class conscious pair, living as close to Athens as they seem to do, could hardly have failed to notice it. Katy Panou acts the part of the disdainful girl so well that I found myself wondering if she was not naturally made that way. The picture is stolen however by a bunch of children who are quite the liveliest and most attractive I have seen on any screen.

Is there any future for Greek films? At the moment, no; these pictures, together with a number of news items have used up all the raw stock film available in Greece. Negative 35 mm. film brought in by the Germans can still be found at black market prices, positive film is almost unattainable at any price. There is only one copy of *Villa with the Water Lilies*, so it is unlikely that anyone will ever see it outside Greece. Finos Films, the main production company, have enough material for one more picture, after which film production will stop.

No film is manufactured in Greece, and the chances of importing it from the U.S.A. or anywhere appear remote.

Greece is a small country and a poor one. There are only about eight million Greek people in the world, most of them far from any cinema. The box office returns of a Greek speaking film will never be large enough to render any lavish outlay profitable. But if Greece cannot afford to make feature films on a colossal scale, it does not mean she cannot make her own contribution to the cinema. It will have to be a contribution in which imagination and native wit take the place of elaborate equipment, but it may be none the worse for that. The materials are there—an incomparable scenic background, effects of light and shadow which never cease to fascinate, a people instinctively expressive of every emotion or idea, from the slightest to the most profound—in the procession, in the dance, in every movement of the body or the face; a fine tradition of acting which has already presented a Paxinou to the screen; and writers, camera men and at least two directors with ideas—Ioannopoulos and Tsavellas—who are capable of tackling something more serious than anything they have dealt with up to date. It will be interesting to see what the next and possibly the final production of Finos Films will be like; for it is the conscious policy of George Tsavellas (who is directing it) to cut away from films of high life, more or less international in character, and requiring costly settings, and to aim at something simpler, sincerer and more purely Greek. Not Greek merely in the sense of having evzones jump from rock to rock to the sound of old Greek airs (as happened in *Exorcismis*), but Greek in the sense of being rooted in the real drama and problems of Greek life, whether on the land or in the city; having as its setting not the expensive mansion or the big

hotel which are much the same the whole world over, but the islands, the streets of Athens, the waterside tavernas of Piraeus.

It is worth noting that the Ministry of Education has a film department. Most of the films used in the past have been imported from Germany, Britain, France and the United States. Yet this is precisely the type of film, not costing much yet requiring originality, which it should lie well within the power of the Greeks to make. If the film experience, and the apparatus which already exist in Greece could be geared on to the problems of national education—not only in the academic sense but for example in an anti-tuberculosis or anti-malaria campaign, the gain not only for the Greek cinema but for Greece as a whole would be incalculable. Before the war about a dozen 16 mm. projectors, with light producing units, were being taken round by car or mule in the outlying parts of Thrace and Macedonia, while some six hundred schools had projectors of their own. Some remain; most have been looted or destroyed. A few mobile cinemas of the type employed by the British M. of I. could however cover a great deal of ground and provide rapid instruction in certain essential matters—particularly health—of a kind which could not otherwise be given in the time. It must be remembered that most schools have been destroyed or rendered unusable and that a large proportion of the child population has grown up semi or completely illiterate. If the Greek cinema could buckle down to something practical like this it might produce something of more than local interest. Greece may be a small state, but ancient Athens was a smaller one, and the efforts of Aeschylus, Socrates, Pheidias, though limited to a specific local need, have in fact had repercussions which could not have been predicted at the time.

American Letter

By Herman G. Weinberg

THIS quarter's report is more interesting for what it promises than what was achieved during the last three months. Lubitsch tried for the second time to revivify an old success of his (the first try was the remake of *Kiss Me Again* into *That Uncertain Feeling*) and for the second time he failed. *A Royal Scandal*, for all its gloss, is no *Forbidden Paradise*, and I'm sure he would be the first to admit it. The first, fine, careless rapture is gone; gone, also, is the old zest and love for making films for their own sake. *A Royal Scandal* is a faded courtesan with bags under her eyes. A few dry, desperate chuckles are all that remain of the witty lubricity of the original. Of it may be truly said, *O tempora! O mores!*

Another instance of what makes so many Hollywood films look as if they were directed by eunuchs is the recent re-make of the gay little French comedy, *Circonstances Attenuantes*. As played by Michel Simon and Arletty, it was amusingly amoral, tinged with that Gallic scepticism and *panache* that make French films so human. Its American version, *Stepping Into Society*, retains the shell (and not all of that, either) throwing the filling away, as being too unpalatable for our "delicate" tastes. I do not use the metaphor lightly. Where watching the French original is like feasting on lobster and champagne, watching the American version is like feasting on the lobster-shell and water.

That Laurence Stallings, author of *The Big Parade* and co-author of *What Price Glory*, could have had a hand in the making of so incredible a potpourri of puerilities as *Salome*, *Where She Danced*, is but another instance of the pall of *ennui* (to which

I referred two issues back) that can sometimes settle on a creative artist. The less said about this stew of sheep-dip, parading itself as *faisandé* wares unmatched since Caligula's farewell bachelor party, the better.

That leaves but one film for which I have a good word to say—*A Song to Remember*, though without Chopin's score I shudder to think what *that* might have been like. But the coruscating Chopin music (played by Iturbi), the felicitous casting of Stephen Bekassy as the young Liszt, the unusual feat of making it seem as if the star (Cornel Wilde), who can't play a note, really *can* play the piano (even though he looks no more like Chopin than your grandmother does) and several exultant moments contrived by Sydney Buchman in his screenplay—all these things helped greatly to make it seem as if it were a far better than average film, which I think it is. The sound recording is, of course, magnificent. I was distressed, however at the premium grade of *jambon* exhibited by the usually reticent Muni (as Chopin's teacher) and by the piqued air of the usually lovely Merle Oberon (as George Sand).

But the offing holds good promise and let us hope the promises are fulfilled, to wit: Jean Renoir's *Diary of a Chambermaid*, by Octave Mirbeau, with Paulette Goddard; two James Cain stories, *Serenade* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*; Albert Lewin's *Bel Ami* (after Guy de Maupassant); Chaplin's *Bluebeard*; Orson Welles' *It's All True*; Metro's *Lucretia Borgia*; Fritz Lang's *Scarlet Street* (after de la Fourchardier's *La Chienne*, which Renoir once filmed);

Rene Clair's *The Next Time I See Paris*; The Marx Bros. *A Night In Casablanca*; Renoir's *The Southerner*, completed and previewed to high acclaim; Howard Hughes' long postponed *The Outlaw*.

Advanced word on the first part of the new Eisenstein trilogy, *Ivan the Terrible* is very mixed and I prefer not to comment until I have seen it. The Russians plan also finally to do *Crime and Punishment* themselves, now that Hollywood, the French and the Germans had a try at it. There has been no word from Disney about his next feature and, for whatever it is worth, I offer the suggestion that he do *Reynard, the Fox*, that deathless 15th Century satire of eternal human verities. And while I daydream about fancies that will perhaps never be realised, because this isn't the best of all possible worlds, I should like to see Disney some day do, even if it has to be only for limited circulation, a one-reel film after Miakovsky's delightful little poem, *Paris*, wherein the great Russian poet pleads with the Eiffel Tower to come to Moscow.

Now that *Colonel Blimp* and *The Way Ahead* made such excellent impressions here, everyone knows that England means seriously to give Hollywood a run for the money, as the saying goes. *Henry V* and *Antony and Cleopatra* are eagerly awaited. I have not seen a really first-rate Russian film for a long time and, unless Hollywood surprises us all with the list of forthcoming offerings previously mentioned, in which, incidentally, I forgot to include the new Sturges film, *The Sin of Harry Diddlebock*, I think the best films in the immediate future will come out of England and France. Advance reports of the new French films, including some made during the occupation, sound very good, indeed.

Since writing the above, I have seen two more films, *Without Love*, and *The Clock*, both of which merit your attention only for the presence of a most personable and winning young man, Keenan Wynn, with a penchant for playing impish drunks. He's really better than this probably sounds.

LIGHTEN OUR DARKNESS!

Requests ELIZABETH CROSS

ONCE upon a time, (and let's admit it, once and for all, things were very different when we were young) you got a real eyefull of glare at the cinema. Certainly some films were distinguished by a drizzle, thickening to a steady downpour as the copies grew older or the cinema cheaper, but, roughly speaking, you could generally see what it was all about. How different it is now that the film has become Art. Ah me!

Mr. Orson Welles has a good deal to answer for in this particular spot of trouble. Never can one forget *The Magnificent Ambersons* living, one supposes, a sub-aquatic life in their

gloomy greenhouses, where the dim light is only equalled by the incoherent and inaudible speeches that occur from time to time. Naturally, Mr. Orson Welles is grand enough to do what he damn well likes, and if other folk can't take it, that's just too bad for them, they're just poor ignorant white trash and can stick to Mr. Shakespeare in a theatre. (Which I propose doing in future anyway.) But, and it's one of those important buts, just because Orson Welles can do it that does not mean that every other producer has to shoot his scenes in varying degrees of darkness and then go home in the comfortable

conviction that he's elevated the movie several stages higher. No, it does not, but there's a devil of a lot of them doing it and the infection seems to be spreading so that you get short shorts almost black black, (relieved here and there by a neon sign) as well as all the intimate restaurant or bed scenes in the "big" film in a succession of dim-outs.

To be perfectly frank, at the very local cinema we frequently see nothing, for quite long periods, owing to the fact that the operators (very, very young and very spare time) have forgotten to turn some knob or other that it is necessary to turn. Another reason is that the operators are leaning over the edge of their pen and admiring their latest girl friend down below or sneering at some couple more ardent than discreet. However, when and if they manage to run the film properly what do we see then?

We see the dim profile of the hero as he dashes along the dark road in his dark roadster. Occasionally we see the glow of a cigarette in the dark. We hear voices, also in the dark, and the less sophisticated of us can't tell whether they're male or female, hero (rather a tenor) or the villainess (deep contralto). You see also, in the adventure films, dim figures creeping along dimmer corridors, sinister shadows lurking in doorways, blinds pulled down hastily over lighted windows. (All frightfully like wartime days with the still suffering firewatchers watching for non-existent fires, and the guilty pulling down blinds before the wardens or the neighbours kicked up a row.)

After many months of toil and austerity we decided to break out and go to the cinema. We were prepared for the individuality of the presentation (meaning the peculiar habits of the operator) but we did look forward to a bit of a dazzle. We wanted to give our eyes a treat, we didn't mind a bit if we suffered from

shock or strain. We were not put to the test. We saw a Fred Astaire film which was amazingly lousy, so lousy that maybe it was as well that it took place practically entirely in semi or total darkness. (Here we may digress as usual to lament that one or two gems of wit and delight were embedded in this sorry mass. For instance there was darling Robert Benchly making quite the most brilliant speech of his career, illustrating it with very fine diagrams that meant about as much as most diagrams, and Robert smiling in his confiding way so that all was more than well. But how dim, how drear, how full of twilight and shadows and general can't seeableness! After all, they can't be saving fuel and power at Hollywood, or in the stately homes of the aristocracy where most films appear to be shot.

Oh, and just to make a nice finish to the evening, the short comedy was also one of complete black-out. It was called, I believe, *Seeing Anny Home*, and was based on a theme of innocent fun which would have been innocently funny if we hadn't had to strain our eyeballs to see it at all. Poor father was obliged to escort a lady visitor home (naturally at night): when he gets her home she begs him to take some little girl who was spending the evening at her house home likewise. He does so (it is still dark night, naturally); when he gets her home, he is obliged to escort her grandma home. This sort of thing goes on indefinitely, but the strange business was, not only were the streets dark, with an occasional poor light, but the various homes were dark too, relying it would seem, on a candle or oil-burner. Strange in a country of immense mechanisation.

Let producers renters and exhibitors take warning now, and stop the rot before it's too late. Don't let them imagine that just because they can get the actors to talk there's no need for them to be seen.

CINE PROJECTION WITH AN EPISCOPE

A Science Handicraft or Art Project based on the
Cinema described by A. W. BARTRAM

THE following is an account of work that has been carried out with various groups of boys during the war years at the County Modern School for Boys at Mottingham, Kent.

The work itself is perhaps novel but the real value lies in the scientific aspect of its teaching.

It has entailed a large amount of practical work which has helped to develop the boys' initiative in overcoming difficulties that arose by using only the materials to hand.

It had been a training in the not so easy task of sticking relentlessly to a job and seeing it through over a period of time even after a few failures. It has meant boys working together as a team.

The accompanying work in science has brought in the rather neglected subject of scientific history. It has aimed at showing that discoveries and inventions are not made necessarily by the gifted few but rather as a result of the accumulated knowledge and research of many workers of all nations and times.

Convenient Names

The various branches of science have all been involved, Electricity, Chemistry and Physics. They have provided a wealth of practical experiments with the cinema as the main theme which helped to show the all embracing nature of science; how all its branches have been directed to

this common end and that the usual divisions of Optics, Magnetism, Inorganic Chemistry, etc., are not different but are rather convenient names for classifying different aspects of science.

Tea-Chest Episcope

Some four years ago I built a tea-chest episcope to aid my teaching of Art appreciation. A boy, watching my fingers projected moving on to the screen as I adjusted the picture said —“What a pity we can't have real movies like at the cinema”.

That chance remark was the cause of the development of this project. I thought the matter over. To produce films photographically at that time—1940—was impossible and in any case we had no cine projector.

However the cartoon films of Disney and others were, in the first instance, entirely hand produced and only photographed as a last process.

They could do it why not us? If we projected the “film” by the episcope principle we could use the actual drawings and the question of photography need not arise.

We commenced a study of the film from the earliest days of the discovery of the persistence of vision and the various toys such as the Zoetrope which demonstrated that discovery. We then proceeded through the story of Uchatus, Frieze Green, Paul, Lumiere, Edison, etc., to the working of the modern projector.

We made copies of some of the early toy projectors and finished by re-building a toy 35 mm. projector so as to demonstrate all the points of the "modern" silent projector.

We followed in like manner the story of photography—which lends itself well to practical experimental work.

We were now able to design and build a specially large scale intermittent movement that was fitted to the episcopic and would project a 3" wide strip of paper "film" on which was pasted the 2" x 2" traced "frames" of a progressive movement.

Loop Films

This short trial showed such promise that we set about the production of a series of short loop films each telling a little story. One was *Steep Hill*, which showed a car dashing down a hill, crashing through a loaded hay-wain to come out at the other side all ready to begin again.

The next step forward was the production of a real "feature" film which we decided was to be a "talkie".

This was called *Train Buster* and when finished lasted several minutes.

It told the story of a D.H. Mosquito from its take-off in England, its flight over the war-torn English Channel full of wrecks, mines and submarines to Germany where a munitions train was sighted. This was attacked and blown up. The Mosquito then flew away into the setting sun, its mission completed.

The whole film was completed in just over a half term of normal lessons.

The addition of sound meant the tackling of an entirely new problem. In science lessons we dealt with the history of acoustics, electricity and magnetism and especially telephony and sound-recording. We built the usual buzzers, telephones, etc., and also our own direct disc-recording gear and a complete 16 mm. sound-projector which was almost entirely

built from scrap materials. We tried adding sound to the film *Train Buster* by the simple expedient of standing the sound effects "crew" behind the screen. This was immediately rejected as being too elementary. We progressed to having a microphone and amplifier, but this again we felt did not really meet the case for a sound film.

Direct disc recording proved most unsuitable because of the impossibility of synchronising the sound and the film. Hence the train was apt to blow up before the pilot attacked it!

We solved the problem by using the Blattnerphone steel-wire direct recording method which allowed us to drive both the projector and the recorder (by hand) from a common drive thus ensuring synchronisation. The variations of the pitch of the pilot's voice could easily be put down to his excitement at the various happenings throughout the film.

Thus we achieved our desire to produce a real, home-made sound film.

Next Efforts

Our next efforts were concerned with the production of educational films that would be of actual use to me in school.

These were all loops, quite short and designed for picture by picture or motion projection.

The Growth of the Pea was compiled from a series of twice weekly drawings of a pea plant growing on blotting paper.

The 4-Stroke Internal Combustion Engine was produced after a course of study on the real thing. The use of colour enabled us to show very clearly the passage of the fresh mixture into the cylinder, its compression ignition by spark and its final exhausting into the exhaust pipe.

We have also produced sets of "film-strips" for the episcopic in the form

of scrap-book cuttings pasted on to a strip of paper. *The History of Transport by Land, Sea and Air* was an especially commendable effort. It was entirely hand drawn and the boys searched for their data and drawings in dozens of books from many sources.

A further use for the episcope principle is being tried out at the present moment. We have drawn enlarged models of sound-track on paper strips which are projected episcopically on to a photo-electric cell while they are in movement.

These were drawn after an examination of the wave shape of simple sounds, such as tuning forks and vibrating strings, which we project by means of a rotating mirror oscilloscope.

We are also copying a short length of sound track by projection on to paper and intend to rearrange the words so as to produce a sentence "never spoken by human tongue".

An interesting experiment we tried was the recording of sound by gramophone methods on to gelatine. The

record was projected by means of an optical lantern and the grooves copied on to paper strip. This was finally played on the episcope sound reproducer.

Soon it is to be hoped we shall be able to obtain negative film stock and show the actual methods in use for recording sound on film.

As a last use of the episcope we have produced a series of puppet sketches in which the scenery is provided by the episcope. A rear projection screen taking the place of the backcloth. The scenery so projected enabled the action to take place unbounded by the normal limitations of the stage, for the scenery could change as the puppet walked (on the spot) along. He could climb a mountain, swim under the sea or fall out of an aeroplane.

The use of a long scenery strip cut as a "stencil" enabled a second strip to be moved along behind that. Thus the puppet could walk along a long street while the clouds sailed past behind the roof-tops.

Notes & News

British Film Institute

After ten years Miss Olwen Vaughan has left the Institute to become film officer of U.N.R.A.A. All her friends and admirers in the Film Institute and Film Society movements will wish her well in her new post.

In view of the increasing importance attaching to Visual Education the Governors have decided to enlarge the Governing Body so as to allow the Ministry of Education to be represented.

Miss Grayson continues her excellent work as the Institute's travelling educational representative. The L.C.C. has also seconded Mr. F. E. Farley, one of the original 1940 "campaigners" to act as a second travelling educational representative. His work will lie with training colleges and L.E.A.'s mainly in the south of England while Miss Grayson will concentrate on the Midlands and the

North. One of Mr. Farley's first activities has been to resuscitate the London Schools Film Society. He is also in touch with some of the other teachers' film groups which existed prior to 1939, and hopes to persuade them also to restart operations.

Dr. Roger Manvell, who has recently joined the staff of the Institute, has been on a very profitable month's lecturing tour in the Middle East. He is now back facing a busy programme of lectures, and courses on Film Appreciation. He still has a few dates vacant and should be addressed c/o The British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

There has also been established a joint committee of the Scottish and English and Welsh Federations whose first decision has been to establish as soon as possible an independent booking agency for film societies. The first annual general meeting is on September 8. This will be combined

over the week-end with a showing of new films suitable for inclusion in society programmes during the coming season. Mr. Rank asked the Education Panel to elaborate their suggestions with regard to the World Studies series. This has been done and Mr. G. Cons has been appointed technical consultant on the series.

National Film Library

The Committee has purchased Mrs. Pomroy's collection of films. This includes 19 one-reel stories and some 35,000 feet of news reel material some of which is of great historical importance.

Manchester Film Institute Society

Although the Society did not arrange a full programme of standard shows during the spring, it is proposing to put on a special show, *Le Roi s'amuse*, in aid of "The Help to French Schools Society". Other activities include lunch-time shows at the Central Library, where we have already shown *West Wind*, *This is Colour*, and *Drifters*, and hope to put on *Drawings that walk and talk*, *Mor Vran*, and *Our Country* before September.

The first programme to be arranged by the newly formed Scientific Sub-Committee took place on July 17. The response was sufficient for developments to be made in this work during the approaching winter session.

Members of the Society have recently been highly gratified to attend a series of lectures on the Cinema, arranged by the extra-mural department of the University of Manchester.

Merseyside Film Institute Society

The season concluded with two highly successful shows. *Le Jour se Lève* was shown in May for the benefit of the Gordon Smith Institute for Seamen, and raised £125. On a fine evening in June two René Clair films—*An Italian Straw Hat* and *I Married a Witch*—played to capacity. These two films, with their obvious resemblances, make an interesting double-feature programme.

A brains trust on the Arts held in the foyer of the Philharmonic Hall is the only other event to record. One question on Tolstoy's definition of art kept the Trust debating for over half an hour. The members of the Trust were the Chairman (Professor W. Lyon Blease) Dr. Dorothy Knowles, Miss Mary Morris, Peter Glenville, Herbert Hodge, and Dr. John S. Spink.

Two programmes of shorts have been selected for the July end-of-term for technical and secondary school children, one for younger pupils on natural history

and the other for senior pupils on scientific subjects.

At the Annual Meeting on July 18 there were shown *Memphis Belle* and *The Battle for the Marianas*, both outstanding examples of the American combat-documentaries. Mrs. Audrey Langston of the O.W.I. was also present.

Belfast Film Institute Society

At the last show but one of the recent season, when *Le Jour se Lève* was the main film, over a thousand young Belgian troops were guests of the Belfast Film Society; and this appreciation of the programme pointed the regret of the Society that it was not possible to organise a further series of special shows for these visitors.

The season finished with *Battle of Russia* (completing the series of five in the *Why We Fight* sequence) and *Forgotten Village*. Apart from new documentaries like *Out of Chaos* and some "sure fire" French comedy revivals, the season has been interesting for the inclusion of a number of American or English films which have not been given a commercial or general distribution. *Prelude to War* and *Welcome to Britain* were other examples of English-dialogue films not shown in local cinemas.

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FILM PRODUCERS

The society has weathered the war successfully, but counts on continued support from a faithful nucleus of members, as well as guests, especially until a more suitable hall is available for the more comfortable enjoyment of films. Cut off to some extent from the rest of the United Kingdom by wartime restrictions on travel and communications, we also look forward now to a fuller resumption of relations with the film society world in Great Britain, and to continued relations with the British Film Institute who have helped us so much.

The Glasgow Film Society

The Glasgow Film Society—the oldest operating film society in the British Isles—concluded its first season in the Cosmo Cinema in March. Five meetings were held, the leading films being *Welcome to Britain*, *Burg Theatre*, *Naples au Baiser de Feu*, *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, and the Sacha Guitry version of *Pasteur*. The membership is limited by the size of the cinema to 1,100 and is at present full. Two performances of each programme are given, in the afternoon and in the evening. The new season will open on September 30 and will be made up of seven meetings.

Edinburgh Film Guild

Reviewing the season at the Edinburgh Film Guild's annual general meeting, Norman Wilson, the chairman, said that many activities had been engaged in to achieve the Guild's aim of creating a high standard of film appreciation. The Guild assisted in organising a week-end film school at the Army Study Centre, and a similar school for leaders of Youth Clubs. As a result of the latter it had been recommended that film discussion groups and performances should become a recognised activity of Youth Clubs in Edinburgh, and the Film Guild has been asked to assist.

The Guild assisted in the preparation of a cinema exhibition sponsored by C.E.M.A. and provided a large selection of stills from its collection.

In furtherance of its policy of encouraging Scottish film production, the Guild undertook the publication of *Presenting Scotland*, which surveyed the whole position and made various recommendations. The book had wide publicity and helped to focus attention on the need for using films in the service of the community. One of its suggestions was that the principal cities should undertake the production of films in their own interest, and the Guild put forward a proposal that a Films of Edinburgh Committee should be set

up to sponsor the production of films on the Capital.

It is proposed to call a conference of all bodies interested in the setting up of a central organisation in Edinburgh to provide a service of help and information to clubs, societies, and community centres, and to co-ordinate film activities in the area. The Guild has set aside a sum of £500 for the purchase of a projector and apparatus for its own work and that of associated societies.

The Guild will open its new season in October. As a supplement to the Sunday performances, a special series of week-night programmes is being arranged. This will illustrate the history of the cinema as far as films available on 16mm. make this possible.

Irish Film Society

The Irish Film Society has successfully completed its ninth season. It had a membership of 750 in Dublin, 200 in Waterford, 100 in Sligo and 130 in our "sub-standard" branch at Port Laoise, giving an over-all membership of 1,180. The result of the questionnaire circulated

(Continued on page 61)

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The Rickmansworth G.T.C. Film Group

An interesting experiment described

by P. JACOBS, O/C 327 Coy., G.T.C.

I started the Rickmansworth G.T.C. Film Group, because I wanted to find out whether the girls gained anything from going to the cinema, or if they merely went as an escapist pastime without using their sense of judgment.

The majority of the 30 cadets all between 15½ to 18½, I discovered visit the cinema once a week, quite a number twice a week, and a few even more frequently. This is done although they attend G.T.C. Parades regularly one evening a week, and most of them do some form of training on a second evening.

Owing to a very full G.T.C. programme, it is not possible to devote much time to the film section. Therefore we carefully select a film to be seen and discussed, only about once in every six weeks. The girls can either see the film with the G.T.C. Company, or go with their parents, girl or boy friends when it suits them. The cadets then discuss the film at the next G.T.C. Parade.

The following films were selected: *This Happy Breed*, *Going My Way*, *Song of Bernadette* and *Rebecca*. Requests from the cadets have been made that we shall go and see and discuss *Since You Went Away*, *Henry V* and *Sunday Dinner for a Soldier*. (The last-named film was recommended by Miss Noel Streatfeild in an excellent talk she gave the Company on "America", as showing what Americans were really like.)

First Impressions

The first thing that struck me in the discussions was that this age group did not see the same as the adult saw in the films. Secondly, that the adolescent is intolerant of any character that does not live up to her high and as yet untried ideals of moral behaviour. The girls' moral appreciation was very high and fully developed. But always of course in the sphere of adolescent views on morality.

The girls' aesthetic appreciation is limited. Where a film story comes within their own experience they sense the true and false values of acting, story-telling, etc. But where the subject is outside their own experience, they are inclined to

accept everything. They seem to be more sensitive to sight than sound.

All of this comes out clearly in the following account of the discussion on *This Happy Breed*.

The Discussion

General: It was generally considered a very good English film. The acting was marvellous, and the technicolour such that you could look at the film without getting eye-ache.

The voting on the film was as follows:— Outstanding—No votes; Very Good—21 votes; Good—4 votes; Fair—1 vote.

Story: The film told the story of the everyday life of an ordinary family between the two Great Wars. Opinion was divided as to whether it was a true English home or not. Everything was too drab. This one family had more tragedy and trouble than any normal family of the time, and the scene where one of the daughters came and broke the news of the car accident was rather overdone. The film pointed out how weak some people were prior to this War and how we have "pulled up our socks" now. Five cadets thought the film should have been brought up-to-date, to see what did actually happen to the family during the second Great War, particularly to the daughter, who went out to join her husband in Singapore. However, they came up against a powerful opposition. It was thought one of the main attractions of *This Happy Breed* was the fact that it was a change from the many war films. It was felt, it was not intended to join the ranks of the war films, and apart from that it had to finish somewhere, and the beginning of this war was an excellent point.

Actors and Acting :

Celia Johnson: All agreed Celia Johnson played the part of the mother marvellously. There was a difference of opinion on the difficulty of playing the part due to its being very ordinary. The mother came in for a good deal of criticism. Her hair style was too modern at the opening of the film. Everyone considered her too dowdy for a woman of her position. She had a lovely house and could afford a daily help yet she wore clothes more suited to a woman

of the poorer classes. She was very hard about her daughter when she eloped.

Kay Walsh: Kay Walsh's acting as Queenie was very good. But her clothes were too modern. Some girls thought her father should have given her a hiding; her father was too kind and her mother too hard. Queenie didn't deserve to marry John Mills. The film did not explain whether Queenie went to Singapore for a short while only. Anyhow she shouldn't have left her baby. In fact her behaviour on the whole was thought very bad.

John Mills: John Mills was smashing. Some cadets thought John Mills rather a sissy to take Queenie (Kay Walsh) back after the way she had turned him down and run away from home. Some cadets thought John Mills married Queenie out of pity, but the more romantic-minded

ones thought he married her for true love. John Mills was very good in the part.

Robert Newton: The part of the father was played by Robert Newton. The majority thought he played the part very well, but two members thought he was just putting-on his accent and at times kept slipping in his speech.

Stanley Holloway: Stanley Holloway was wonderful. Some thought the "regiment" part overdone. But this was overruled because many said their own fathers make similar remarks.

Grandma, Aunt Sylvia and Elder Sister: Were very well played.

Conclusion: On the whole it was considered that *This Happy Breed* was one of the best English films that we have seen for a long while.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

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THE MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN. 6d. (7s. 6d. a year post free). A critical record of educational, religious and entertainment films, together with an appraisement of their teaching value and suitability for different age groups.

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(continued from page 58)

to the Dublin branch gave the following order of preference to our feature films:—
(1) *Kameradschaft*, (2) *Lone White Sail*,
(3) *L'Etrange Monsieur Victor*, (4) *Hotel du Nord*, (5) *His Girl Friday*, (6) *Sans Famille*,
(7) *Der Spiegel*, (8) *Storm in a Teacup*.

The most popular short was *Night Mail* which the members have already seen at least twice in the Society and probably several times in the commercial cinema. Next came *And So to Work* and *Drawings that Walk and Talk*.

It is an unfortunate fact that, due to the large size of our Society, there are very few of our members who know more than ten of their fellows. To remedy this the Film School branched out into yet a further activity (a rather uncinematic one) and tried to introduce a little social life by running a combined dance and party some two months ago, when the younger members of the Society enjoyed themselves immensely.

The Children's Film Committee are continuing with their series of children's matinées in the suburban cinemas of Dublin towns. They are also busily engaged in the organisation of a summer school on "Film and Education" for primary, secondary and technical teachers. Such a course will be the first of its kind in Eire.

Leicester Film Society

Since the 35 mm. season finished in March, a number of 16 mm. performances has been held with the dual object of showing some of the very old classics to members who have never seen them and of bridging the gap which the summer would otherwise cause. The membership of the Society is about 300, as it was before the war; this is a strangely small figure for a city of about 300,000 inhabitants! Some of the members are engaged in film-making activities in the neighbouring countryside, others are occupying themselves with the impending major improvements to the sound-equipment and projectors.

It is interesting to record that The Wyggeston School, Leicester has been using films, mainly sound, for instructional and general educational purposes continuously and on a considerable scale since 1937. About half a million feet of 16 mm. film have been run through the projector in that time, mostly on the Sciences and Geography. Nearly all the M.O.I. films have been shown here, and a special feature is the annual film appreciation course which is given to all boys of school leaving age. The film libraries have been closely and intensively searched for material for these purposes and a useful critical index has been built up;

considerable knowledge of technical matters and time tabling has been enjoyably acquired. Any other workers in this field who would like to exchange information are invited to write to Mr. J. R. Cottrill, at the above school, University Road, Leicester.

Enquiries about next season will be welcomed from anywhere in the Midlands, and we shall be glad to exchange our printed programmes with those of any other society in the U.K. or elsewhere.

Enquiries should be sent to the Film Secretary, Mr. J. R. Cottrill, c/o Vaughan College, Leicester.

London University Film Society

Owing to examinations it has been impossible to hold more than one meeting of the London University Film Society this term. The silent German film *The Last Laugh* and the early Chaplin *Dough and Dynamite* were shown to a small but enthusiastic audience. It is hoped that the Society will continue next term and members of the University who are interested should apply to their college representatives.

Colwyn Bay

The society held its third Annual General Meeting on May 31, after a season of eleven performances. The officers and committee were re-elected for the season 1945/6.

There is some doubt however, whether, it will be possible for the society to continue, as a substantial part of its membership consists of evacuated civil servants who may be leaving the district.

Tredegar Film Society

We held our annual meeting on the first Sunday in May, when the balance sheet was presented, which showed a substantial balance in hand to start the next session with. Officers were appointed and those retiring were complimented on their success in launching the society on its first venture; criticism and suggestions were invited when a real desire was expressed that the society should invite some of the best film critics to speak to them on film appreciation and other subjects: the meeting concluded with the showing of *Song of Ceylon* and *Toscanini*.

Several enquiries have come in asking for advice on how to initiate a film society from towns in South Wales; we are hoping that this trend will develop so that we could constitute a South Wales Federation where we could discuss to our mutual interest the problems that arise from time to time, of films and cinema in particular.

The Workmen's Institute have come to the assistance of our society by agreeing

to purchase a 16mm. projector which will be at our disposal during the week for showing technical and educational films, at the same time the cinema is at our disposal for the next winter's session; this generous attitude of the Workmen's Institute makes our work much easier.

Invitations have been sent out for next season's members. Over 200 have responded up to date. So we are looking forward with a lively interest to our next session.

Cambridge Film Society

The past season was in some ways the most successful since the present society was established in 1941. We doubled the number of performances given a day, and were thus enabled to double membership, which stood at roughly 850. At the same time we had to pay the penalty for this increase, as, partly because of the less discriminating nature of the larger membership, and partly because of the higher percentage of men the war had brought to the university at an unusually early age, sections of the audience failed to appreciate films that were not in the modern idiom and convention—this applied especially to the silent classics that were revived in 16mm. shows.

We also engaged for the first time in production, attempting a short film on a subject of great interest to us—the Tripos examinations. General inexperience, shortage of equipment, and various local difficulties caused at first some confusion, but the Unit soon settled down, and, taken all in all, the results have not been entirely unsatisfactory.

In this coming season we are making further efforts to extend our activities—introducing some shows on specialised themes, developing our production unit, and, if conditions are favourable we hope to establish club-rooms and to start a library.

We have been sending our programmes to as many societies as we could, and if any others would like to exchange programmes with us, we should be very glad to hear from them. The secretary, Mr. Levi of St. Catherine's College, would be glad to meet members of any other society who happen to find themselves in Cambridge; they will be welcome at our shows, which take place nearly every Sunday evening during term.

Chester Film Society

The Chester Film Society has completed a successful third season during which the following films were shown:—*Le Bonheur*, *Citizen Kane*, *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*, *South Riding*, *No Greater Love*, *Stagecoach*, *All That Money Can Buy* and *Fantasia*.

Short films included *The River*, *The City*, *Valley of the Tennessee* and *Hymn of the Nations*.

It has been found possible to extend the Society's policy with regard to children's shows. Four performances for children have been given during the season, the last two being recognised by the authorities as of educational value, thus making it possible for them to be held during school hours as part of the children's education.

Leamington Film Society

With the purpose of exhibiting films of intrinsic merit and artistic appeal, the new Leamington Society has succeeded in establishing itself firmly from its birth on March 11.

At first the Committee was dubious and, at one stage of the preliminaries, decided to abandon the project: however the persuasions of an enthusiast prevailed, and the wheels for the first show were set in motion.

The best cinema—The Regal—was available Sundays 4 o'clock for two hours, and fortnightly shows were arranged. Six shows were to be covered for 12/- per member (minimum age 16); one friend for each member could pay 2/3 at the ticket-office prior to show.

2,000 prospectus-application forms were circulated through the leading shops and banks and elsewhere—here it should be mentioned we received universal commendation; a small poster accompanied each block of forms to direct public attention, and the local press advertised addresses for reference and gave us one or two write-ups. Copies of the opening programme synopses were issued to existing members at the show, containing an appeal to co-opt further members.

Un Carnet de Bal was witnessed by the first 236 members and 98 friends. Expenses were almost covered. A little more publicity produced 50 new members.

Three weeks from the start membership had reached 320.

West London Film Society

This Society has just finished a very successful season and in the last six months has nearly doubled its membership. We have given one show a month and August was given over to visits to film studios.

In making up our programmes we have chosen films which have provoked discussion. The subjects chosen were on Town Planning and Housing, Child Welfare and Citizenship.

Among the features shown were *South Riding*, *Jericho*, *Nanook of the North* and, as a complete change from these more serious subjects, our June show was given over to humour with *Dad Rudd M.P.*,

together with an early vintage Charles Chaplin film for contrast. All were well received.

We are now looking forward to a very ambitious programme beginning in September when we expect to have a visit from Roger Manvell to talk on "The Films We Get". Amongst the films we propose showing are *Film and Reality*, *The Blue Angel*, *Metropolis*, *Italian Straw Hat*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Atlantide*, *Judas was a Woman*, *Turksib* and *The end of St. Petersburg*.

We are also forming a scenario writing group and a dramatic group so that when film stock once again becomes available we shall try our hand at amateur production with the aid of the experts amongst our members.

At the moment our shows are given at St. George's Hall, Bond Street, Ealing, but if membership grows in the future as it has in the last four months then we shall have to seek a larger hall. Membership is open to all adults and enquiries for membership will be welcomed by the Hon. Secretary, H. E. Norris, 88, East-coate Avenue, Greenford, Middlesex.

Aberdeen Film Society

The past season has been the most successful since the outbreak of the war. There has been a most encouraging increase in membership and it was possible to give no fewer than eight programmes with an afternoon and an evening showing of each. A special feature of the programmes was the showing of the O.W.I. films including *The Battle of Russia*, but the British Ministry of Information and the British Council productions were also not neglected. Amongst the features played were *The Remarkable Andrew*, *The Reluctant Dragon* (for the special Christmas show) and a number of French films which included a revival of the ever-popular *Carnet de Bal*.

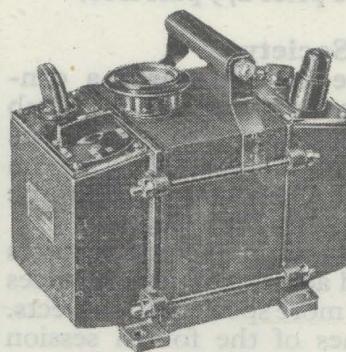
Bradford Civic Playhouse

The Bradford Civic Playhouse ended its Film Society season with the most successful show of the whole year—a programme of films on Dance and Ballet. Thanks for the idea must go to Miss Olwen Vaughan although the actual films shown differed in some respects from those used by the London Film Institute Society. The appreciation shown by a large audience was most encouraging. Since then we have continued with our specialised weekly shows which have included a revival of *Gens du Voyage* and *Otages*.

The Playhouse has also produced a booklet "Theatre" which may one day become a periodical when the restrictions on paper are lifted. This first issue contains

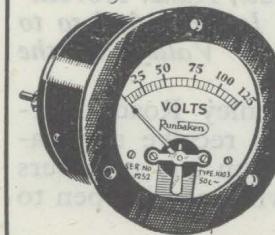
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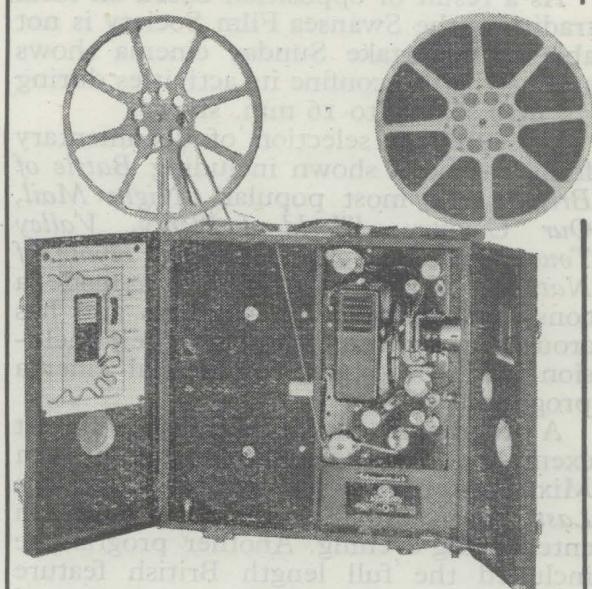
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a number of articles on the theatre but Dr. Roger Manvell has also contributed on The Cinema and the Public. There are a number of original stage designs, some short stories and a little verse. Copies of this excellent new venture can be had from the Playhouse price 2/9 past free.

Norwich Film Society

The Committee have prepared a constitution for the Norwich Film Club (which was presented to members at the first Annual General Meeting on July 10th) and the Club will in future be known as the Norwich Film Society.

Plans for the Autumn include lectures on the cinema and additional performances on 16 mm. for the more specialised subjects.

The programmes of the fourth session will be as follows: September 16th: *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, *Storm*, *The Hague*, *Papageno*. October 21st: *Citizen Kane*. November 18th: *The Virtuous Isidore*, *And so to Work*, *Tulips shall grow*, *Valley of the Tennessee*.

The Secretary, 1, Henley Road, Norwich, will be pleased to receive applications for guest tickets from any members of other film societies who may happen to be in Norwich.

Swansea Film Society

As a result of opposition based on local tradition, the Swansea Film Society is not able to undertake Sunday cinema shows and has had to confine its activities during its first season to 16 mm. shows.

An excellent selection of documentary films has been shown including *Battle of Britain* (the most popular), *Night Mail*, *Our Country*, *World of Plenty*, *Valley Town*, *T.V.A.*, *Song of Ceylon*, *Hymn of Nations*. This type of film has made a considerable appeal to members and has aroused a strong demand for their inclusion in the ordinary commercial cinema programmes.

A programme of films of historic interest exemplified by a Chaplin comedy, a Tom Mix Western and an excerpt from *The Last Laugh* provided members with an entertaining evening. Another programme included the full length British feature film *Bank Holiday*. Finally, a lecture and film showing of *Battleship Potemkin* achieved considerable discussion among those who attended, and was welcomed for its instructive character.

Any other Societies confined to 16 mm. shows are cordially invited to communicate with the Swansea Film Society, in order to exchange programmes and information. Communications should be addressed to Mr. T. G. Bonner, 22, Devon Place, Mumbles, Swansea, Glam.

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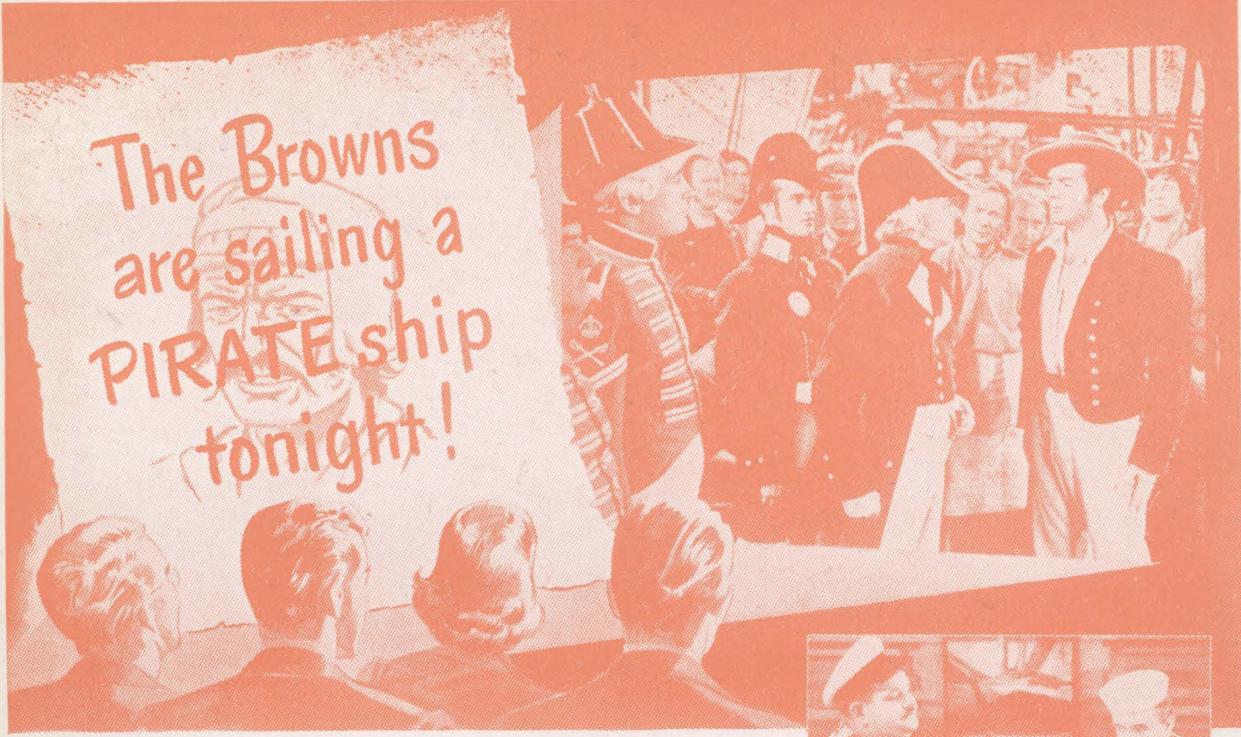
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